
CONSUMER ALERT

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Attorney General provides Consumer Alerts to inform the public of unfair, misleading, or deceptive business practices, and to provide information and guidance on other issues of concern.

"FREE" MEDICINE MAY BE COSTLY

The Attorney General's Office has recently received information about companies and Web sites advertising assistance in obtaining free prescription medicine. Reports indicate that the companies are charging consumers hefty amounts (nearly \$200) for assistance in applying for free drugs.

Many pharmaceutical companies provide free prescription drug medication to consumers unable to afford prescription drugs. Every drug company that offers a patient assistance program has unique eligibility standards.

UNSCRUPULOUS COMPANIES – THE SCAM

Some unscrupulous companies and Web sites do not provide consumers free medicine. Instead, they charge consumers a fee in exchange for filling out forms that consumers then must take to their doctor's office for approval, and which the consumer must then send to the drug company. Consumers can obtain these same forms from their doctor's office to determine if they are eligible for free medication from the drug company. These unscrupulous companies only provide paperwork. In addition, the companies do not and cannot guarantee that consumers will actually obtain free medicine. Consumers reported to the Attorney General they paid one of these companies \$195 and only received part of their drugs free or have not received any drugs yet. In addition, consumers could pay one of these companies money and find they are not eligible for free medicine.

LEGITIMATE FREE DRUG RESOURCES

If you cannot afford prescription drugs, you do not have to pay for information about patient assistance programs that provide free drugs to those who qualify. There are free resources available.

Ask your doctor or other health care provider about free drug programs. Your doctor's office may have information or can explain how you can get information.

Consumers may also contact the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA). PPA is a partnership of drug companies, doctors, health care providers, patient advocacy organizations, and community groups who have combined their resources to help qualifying uninsured consumers get free medicine from various public and private patient assistance programs. PPA is a one-stop shopping concept that offers consumers access to more than 275 public and private patient assistance programs, including more than 150 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies.

To contact PPA, consumers may call toll free 1-888-477-2669, or visit the PPA Web site at www.pparx.org.

CONSUMERS WHO HAVE BEEN MISLED AND PAID FOR "FREE" DRUGS

If you are a consumer who has been tricked by an unscrupulous company and paid for services under the guise that you were getting free medication, the Attorney General urges you to file a complaint. Consumers may contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at:

Consumer Protection Division
P.O. Box 30213
Lansing, MI 48909
517-373-1140
Fax: 517-241-3771
Toll free: 877-765-8388
www.michigan.gov/ag (online complaint form)